

APRIL 2009

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Vol. 4, Nos. 9 &amp; 10



**AAE comes to Orlando**  
The AAE is inviting specialists and GPs to "Engage, Energize and Educate" at its Annual Session.

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**Custom implant abutment**  
Modifying a straight abutment with porcelain to create a custom abutment for minimal cost and improved esthetics.

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**The business of hygiene**  
Industry standards state that 33 percent of total practice production should come from the hygiene department.

▶Page 37

## Patient's stem cells harvested, transplanted into jaw

By Fred Michmershuizen, Online Editor

Dr. Ivan Ho, a Southern California-based dentist and founder of Platinum Dental, recently performed a concentrated stem cell transplant for one of his patients in need of implants. The innovative procedure, called a bone marrow aspirate concentration (BMAC), is reported to be the first on the West Coast and only the second performed in the United States.

Ho harvested and transplanted stem cells from the patient's own bone marrow into his jawbone to create a dense bone structure to which a dental implant can later be permanently set. The procedure was conducted on March 23 at Platinum Dental in Rancho Santa Margarita, Calif.

The process involved the har-

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## ADA calls on Congress to increase IHS funding

The Indian Health Service (IHS), the federal health program for American Indians and Alaska Natives, is getting some increased attention from the American Dental Association (ADA). John S. Findley, DDS, president of the ADA, recently told the U.S. House Committee on interior appropriations that the IHS dental workforce, already understaffed, faces a significant number of retirements by the most experienced

dentists. Findley pointed out that this occurs at a time when "childhood caries and periodontal disease among diabetics are rampant."

Findley said that nearly 65 percent of the agency's dental specialists are eligible for retirement this year. He asked the subcommittee to increase the program by \$1 million to train new specialists and to ensure future budgets include that funding. DT

## AAE holds Root Canal Awareness Week

By Dental Tribune Staff



Ask people which dental procedure they fear most and you will invariably hear the same answer: the root canal. Such fears often keep people away from dental offices altogether, but the American Association of Endodontists (AAE) wants to change that. To help dispel such fears among the general public, the AAE recently conducted its third annual Root Canal Awareness week.

Root Canal Awareness Week provided an opportunity to dispel longstanding myths about root canal

treatment and increase understanding of the procedure as one that is virtually painless. The week also sought to raise awareness of endodontics as a specialty and highlight the importance of endodontists.

Root Canal Awareness Week was held March 29 through April 4, but the AAE offers its advice to the general public all year long. For more information, visit [www.rootcanalspecialists.org](http://www.rootcanalspecialists.org). DT

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vesting of the stem cells through a small incision in the hip bone of the patient, Jason Morgan, on the morning of the procedure. Using a centrifuge, Ho isolated and concentrated Morgan's stem cells from the plasma, transplanted them into his jaw and then added an allograft.

During a telephone interview with Dental Tribune after the procedure, Ho explained that the stem cells will work with the surrounding tissue to eventually generate healthy, dense bone tissue to which the dental implant can be permanently attached.

The ultimate goal with this procedure, Ho explained, is to find better, new ways of growing bone. "The stem cells should allow for better quality bone growth and better healing," he said.

Stem cells have been used for many years by neurosurgeons and orthopedic surgeons to generate bone for procedures such as spinal and tibia fusions. Now, Ho is applying the stem cell transplant procedure to dental applications to provide an option for patients who may not have previously been candidates for a tooth implant because of poor jawbone density.

Ho described the outpatient procedure as minimally invasive and relatively painless, and said that it takes between one and three hours



A patient's stem cells are harvested through a small incision in the hip bone so that Dr. Ivan Ho can perform a transplant.

to perform. He added that it provides faster healing, less pain and better results than other implant procedures.

"This minimally invasive procedure is an innovative, advanced long-term alternative to existing tooth replacement options such as dentures, bridges and even traditional bone grafting procedures," Ho said. "In addition to providing better and faster healing, the transplantation of the patient's own stem cells enables the body to increase

bone growth in the jaw through angiogenesis to permanently support the dental implant. Because the use of dentures and bridges carry a high risk of problems in many cases — resulting in gum disease, tooth decay and the loss of viable teeth — additional costly surgical procedures are necessary, where dental implants are the most natural solution and provide the best long-term results."

For more than 18 years, Ho has been practicing dentistry out of his Platinum Dental offices in California. He has been described as a pioneer in improving the present state of dentistry, primarily by using the most sophisticated, patient-friendly ways of delivering advanced dental care. Ho received his degree in dentistry from the University of Southern California and is a member of more than 10 professional dental societies. He achieved diplomat status from the International Congress of Oral Implantology, graduated from the MISCH Implant Institution, and received mastership training at the Las Vegas Institute (LVI) for Advanced Dental Studies. Ho is also a Fellow in the American Academy of Implant Dentistry. Ho offers the latest technology to his patients, and he is one of the few dentists in Orange County, Calif., to offer the PRP (platelet rich plasma) procedure.

Platinum Dental, with two locations in South Orange County, Calif., is a dental practice consisting of a team of highly trained and skilled clinicians devoted to restoring and enhancing the natural beauty of smiles using state-of-the-art procedures. Platinum Dental provides comprehensive treatment planning and uses restorative and cosmetic dentistry to achieve optimal dental health for its patients. For more information, visit [www.platinum-dental.net](http://www.platinum-dental.net). DT

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## Fun fact: Angie's List

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(Source: Chicago Dental Society)

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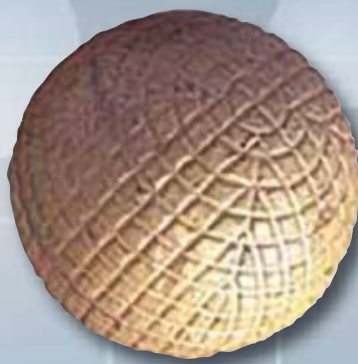
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# Uncover the practice profit killers

Sally McKenzie, CMC

They say the evidence never lies. Here are the clues: Production fluctuates regularly. Collections are shaky. The schedule is either feast or famine. Hygiene is booked solid yet the hygienist is spending almost as much time sitting and waiting as she/he is scraping and cleaning. All these seemingly inconsequential details of the typical dental practice are, in fact, the smoking gun, the fingerprints left behind, the DNA of a crime scene in which practice profits are the victim.

You know how the hairs stand up on the back of your neck when you're staring at those practice financial reports that are telling you something isn't right? Or that chill that washes over you when you realize that you may not be able to pay yourself this month? Then, seemingly without warning, there is so much red ink the books look like a crime scene. Time to bring in the investigators.

The industry standard for overhead is 55 percent of collections. If you are currently at 60 to 65 percent, you probably don't need to notify the authorities. If yours is higher, you may be looking at doin' hard time. Some practices report their overhead as high as 80 percent. They are making a mere 20 cents on the dollar! Now *that* is criminal. The first step in arresting the profit killers is to lay down a few financial laws.

Establish the following budget targets:

- Dental supplies = 5%
- Office supplies = 2%
- Rent = 5%
- Laboratory = 10%
- Payroll = 20%
- Payroll taxes & benefits = 3%
- Miscellaneous = 10%

While there are several factors that influence overhead, look first at the most frequent offenders: high expenses, inconsistent production and low collections.

## Still paying for the 'Good Ol' Days'?

One of the probable high expense culprits is rent that is tipping well over 5 percent of monthly collections. You say you have an alibi, but it's probably not going to hold up during cross examination. Your story is this: You moved into this gorgeous new space that you were certain the patients would absolutely love. At the time, before the economy collapsed to be specific, you convinced yourself that a little boost in production here and there would cover the expense. You ran the numbers, did the math, it all

added up just fine, at least the way you looked at it. You reasoned that you simply had to take the plunge, it was now or never. Unfortunately, now you're wishing it had been never.

Many doctors convince themselves that because the space looks good and it's in a good location, they will be able to improve productivity. They don't conduct a careful investigation of the area. Worst of all, they simply disregard the importance of the 5 percent parameter.

For example, let's say you pro-

duce \$25,000 per month. You collect \$21,000 per month and you want to move into a new facility with a total rent of \$2,500 per month, which would be a \$1,450 increase over what you are paying now. You justify the increase by telling yourself that a couple more crowns per month will take care of it, not a problem. If only it could be that simple.

With a \$2,500 per month rent bill, you will have to collect a handsome \$50,000 each month to stay within the 5 percent guideline. Therefore, you will have to increase collections by a whopping 29 grand to

cover that itty-bitty, little \$1,450 per month rent increase. Feel like you've been robbed?

Moreover, there is no guarantee that the bigger, better space will bring in more patients, particularly when times get tough ... unless you develop a plan for how you will attract new patients and, most importantly, *keep the patients you already have.*

If you've already signed your profits away for the next 30 years

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# Reorganize your practice

By Louis Malcmacher, DDS

There is no question now that the recession has hit our economy and has hit us hard. Many dentists are reporting a slowdown in their schedules with patients putting off treatment longer and increased cancellations. Note that I said many dentists are, but not all dentists are reporting this. Some dentists are actually reporting that their numbers are up and their practices are increasing.

So why are some dentists doing better in the recession, some dentists doing the same as before, and some dentists worse and even much worse? As I meet hundreds of dentists every single week wherever I lecture, the answer always comes down to two things — attitude and reorganization.

First, your attitude will make all the difference in the world. Yes, we all know that the recession has caused huge job losses and an incredible lack of consumer confidence. If you and your dental office are going to roll up into a ball out of fear, and patients can see the fear in your eyes, I can guarantee you that they won't go ahead with treatment and you subconsciously will steer them away from doing any dentistry at all.

What every other business and industry is doing now is reorganizing and shifting the way they do business. This is the key to survival and even to thrive. The sure way to failure is to do nothing or, worse, keep thinking that the way I have always done things is the way I will be doing them in the future.

It is time to reorganize your professional career as a dentist. When times were good, dentists used the excuse that they were too busy



in their offices to learn new skills through continuing education. Stop making excuses for yourself and get out there and get trained and retrained in new areas of dentistry that you have not been involved with before. The most successful dentists we see are the ones who have invested in themselves and their teams with quality continuing education to learn new skills.

Here are some suggestions, especially for a down economy, of some procedures that are big winners for patients and for your practice.

1) *Endodontics*: There are so many quality endodontic courses out there that I would not even know where to begin. In terms of endodontic systems, the Twisted File system by Sybron Endo couldn't be easier and was designed for the

general dentist. If you haven't seen Twisted Files yet, you need to learn about them and how they can boost the speed of your endodontic procedures.

2) *Implants*: Learn to love the edentulous and denture patient again and learn about narrow diameter implants, which are affordable and easily accepted by patients. The system I use in my own practice is Atlas Narrow Diameter Implants by Dentatus. Take one of their excellent courses and in a few hours, you will be well versed in placing these implants. Dentatus has developed an extremely easy system for general dentists that consists of only two surgical burs. The key to their system is their Tuf-Link silicon liner, which retains the denture incredibly well. There are significant advantages to this system because of its unique retention system without the challenges with housings and O-rings.

3) *Botox and dermal fillers*: Even in the current economy, these are very popular patient treatments that dentists around the country are now starting to learn and offer. These services are not only for medical/dental spas, but also for every routine dental practice. You can use these procedures to enhance cosmetic dentistry, treatment of TMJ and bruxism and smoothing of facial wrinkles to enhance your esthetic dental cases. This is certainly one of the hottest topics I speak about in my lectures. Hands-on training opportunities are available through a number of venues and can be found on my Web site [www.commonssensedentistry.com](http://www.commonssensedentistry.com).

4) *Lasers*: Laser dentistry is here and it is time you get on board. The big advantage is that you can greatly reduce or eliminate the need for local anesthesia. You need to make

a wise choice in this field. The Pow-erlase laser by Lares Research is a hard and soft tissue laser; it uses the right wavelengths available for all uses, which most other lasers cannot claim. Lares Research is a recognized and trusted name in dental handpieces, and now in dental lasers.

Simply put, your best investment is yourself and your training. In this economy, now is the time to look at yourself with a critical eye and see how you can improve and add to your clinical skills. By doing so, you are following a sure recipe for success for the challenges that we all have to deal with every single day. [www.commonssensedentistry.com](http://www.commonssensedentistry.com)

## About the author



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## ...are you curious?

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or more, consider renting a portion of the space to another dentist. Consult your attorney for necessary legal guidance, but consider asking the renting dentist to pay a specified amount each month or a percentage of his/her production or collections. Determine if the renting dentist is to provide his/her own staff and telephone lines and what hours the incoming doctor will work. But don't be too quick to take the money and run. Remember, the new dentist now appears to be associated with your practice. Make sure you are renting to someone whose standards are consistent with your own and will reflect positively on you and your practice. In addition, regularly check the interest rates, this may be an excellent time to refinance.

### They don't do the time, so you pay the crime.

Would you knowingly allow someone to steal \$40,000 from you? The logical response is, "Well, of course not!" OK, so explain why you're allowing no-shows and last minute cancellations to take at least that amount from your practice every year.

Broken appointments are the bane of virtually every practice, and one of the most expensive profit pinchers. Admittedly, you may not



be able to absolutely eliminate broken appointments and no-shows, but you can take steps that will go a long way in reducing the impact of this income slayer. The easiest and most efficient means is to confirm all appointments. It is also the most cost-effective method of ensuring that patients are in the chair when they are supposed to be. Here's how to effect this.

**Guidelines:** First, make sure everyone is on the same page. Establish guidelines for broken appointments. Once you define the policy, be sure to communicate it clearly and regularly to both new and existing patients.

**Training:** Next, designate and train the appointment coordinator to handle confirmation calls. This should be viewed as an essential personal phone call from the practice, not a routine chore that some poor employee is stuck with. The importance of dental care is the focus of this phone call. Emphasis is on both the value the practice places in the patient as well as the value of the appointment to the patient.

Pay attention to your choice of words when speaking with patients. Terms such as "routine," "regular," even "cleaning," can minimize the patient's perception of the need and importance of the appointment. In addition, be careful not to "invite" cancellations.

For example, "Mrs. Jones, this is Mary from Dr. Wheeler's office. I just was checking to see if you planned to keep your appointment tomorrow." That approach gives patients a clear opportunity to back out at the last minute. In fact, it almost sounds as though the caller hopes the patient

does cancel. Instead, use the confirmation call to emphasize the significance of this appointment and that the doctor is expecting the patient at the designated time.

**Personal contact:** Make personal contact with the patient 48 hours in advance of the appointment and resist the temptation to leave a message. If a message is left, the appointment cannot be considered confirmed until the practice makes contact personally with the patient. To avoid telephone tag, request a daytime phone number and/or cell phone number from patients. In addition, schedule time for the coordinator to contact patients after hours at home for those who are difficult to reach during the day.

**Electronic contact:** Explore e-mail and text messaging appointment reminder services as well.

Today's busy but always wired patients are much more likely to respond promptly to text messages and e-mail reminders than many practices realize.

**Be specific:** When making appointments, state the day, date, time and length of the appointment. For example, "Mrs. Smith, your 45-minute appointment is on Tuesday, April 28 at 9:50 a.m. If you are unable to keep this appointment, please call us at least two days in advance to allow another patient the opportunity to see the doctor at that time."

**Take note:** Be prepared to take steps to fill gaps in the schedule when they occur. Ask patients if they would consider changing their appointment if one becomes available sooner. Keep a list of those patients willing to move their appointments to fill unexpected voids in the schedule.

Additionally, keep a list of patients who cancel, don't show or don't reschedule appointments and follow-up with those patients. Contact "no shows" within 10 minutes of their appointment time. Indicate concern for their absence. "Mr. Smith, this is Jane from Dr. Carol's office. We were expecting you for a 3 p.m. appointment today and were concerned when we had not heard from you. Is everything OK?"

But don't let the last minute cancellers dictate your schedule. After two "no shows," you should consider the patient unreliable. Tell the patient you will contact her/him when an opening is available, and she/he can determine if that time will be convenient.

Implement a few key steps to ensure that your No. 1 line of income — the patients — is in the chair and paying for your quality dentistry. By doing so, you'll ensure that "no-show" patients and last minute cancellations won't rob your practice profits. DT

### About the author



Sally McKenzie is CEO of McKenzie Management, which provides success-proven management solutions to dentistry nationwide. She is also editor of The Dentist's Network Newsletter, [www.thedentistsnetwork.net](http://www.thedentistsnetwork.net); e-Management Newsletter from [www.mckenziemgmt.com](http://www.mckenziemgmt.com); and The New Dentist™ magazine, [www.thenewdentist.net](http://www.thenewdentist.net). She can be reached at (877) 777.6151 or [sallymck@mckenziemgmt.com](mailto:sallymck@mckenziemgmt.com).

## Fun fact: flossing

### How often do you floss?

In a recent survey conducted by the Chicago Dental Society, dental professionals were asked how often they floss.

More than once a day ... 11%      Once a day ... 60%  
Less than once a day ... 22%

(Source: Chicago Dental Society)

## Tell us what you think!

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# In this economy, customer service matters more than ever!

By Roger P. Levin, DDS

What constitutes superior customer service? More than you might think.

Truly excellent customer service doesn't happen by accident. It requires a system that dictates how every patient every hour of every day will be treated. And that system is absolutely vital to your practice.

In today's economy, your customer service can be nothing less than top notch. Remember that patients are looking at every dollar they spend. They are looking for reasons to skip dental appointments. Something like poor customer service is all the justification they need. You can't afford to let that happen. Your customer service must make it clear to patients that what your practice has to offer is worth their time and hard-earned money.

## The far-reaching effects of customer service

Customer service has an impact on every aspect of your practice and helps lead to total success. Office appearance, staff members, location and even parking all combine to shape your patients' attitudes



about your practice. If their perception is positive, that's good customer service. If their view of your practice is unfavorable, you should not be surprised when patients drift away from your practice.

Improving your customer service is a sure way to strengthen your competitive advantage. Every dental office should be trying to achieve what Levin Group calls *Stage III Customer Service™*. You want to exceed patient expectations at all times. Patients must feel special from the moment they walk into the office, whether it is the first time or the 50th time. It's the key to case acceptance and long-term patient retention.

The quality of your customer service determines how comfortable you make patients feel. Their level of comfort therefore determines how successful your case presentations are. Remember that patients will not accept treatment in an environment that does not meet their expectations. In this economy, your goal is to *exceed* those expectations.

## Superior customer service requires a system

Your system for customer service must be one that can be repeated for every patient, every day. You should outline the steps that lead to exceptional customer service so that all employees know what you want to have happen for every patient, every single time.

So just how can you improve the customer service in your office? Here are six of the many recom-

mendations from Levin Group's Stage III Customer Service curriculum.

1) *Give new patients clear instructions for getting to your office.* This is easy to overlook. Some patients may become frustrated just getting to your office. Are you on a busy street or an unmarked side road? Will your patients have to pay for parking? If so, does your office validate? Give clear instructions and directions to patients when they call to avoid a negative reaction.

2) *Do not make patients wait.* When you fail to keep your appointment times with patients, you set the stage for their impression of your customer service — no matter what other positive experiences they had in your office. You ask that they arrive on time so make sure they can be seen on time!

3) *Provide your staff members with clear job descriptions.* Knowing exactly what is required of staff members will make them less stressed and friendlier to patients. Develop phone scripts so that your staff members are prepared when patients call. This will make for clearer, easier interaction with patients.

4) *Be sure to greet patients warmly in the treatment area.* Whether they are arriving for a hygiene visit, an evaluation or treatment, patients need to feel welcome. Something as simple as a smile or a handshake is a good beginning toward achieving this goal. Team training is the key, as I discuss in my GP Blog at [www.levingroupgp.com](http://www.levingroupgp.com).

5) *Give patients something to help them remember your office.* Pens, key chains, and notepads are just a few of the many mementos you can give your patients to keep your practice foremost in their minds. Giveaways like this don't constitute great customer service — they merely reinforce it.

6) *Think carefully about the specialists to whom you refer.* If your patients have a bad customer service experience in a specialist's office, then it will reflect poorly upon you. Make sure the specialists you work with have the same attitude toward customer service as you do.

## Conclusion

Customer service goes far, far beyond simply being nice. It's about making every interaction with every patient a pleasant experience. By consistently providing high levels of customer service, you are helping protect your greatest investment — your practice.

Superior customer service isn't a luxury. In today's economy, it's a necessity.

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